
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 2021 Session of
2008

INTRODUCED BY CONKLIN, McCALL, GINGRICH, LONGIETTI, GEORGE,
SEIP, MARKOSEK, THOMAS, HARKINS, BISHOP, SCAVELLO, MILLARD,
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VULAKOVICH, GIBBONS, MANDERINO, JOSEPHS, MUNDY, PETRARCA,
HANNA, MAHONEY, HARHAI, McILVAINE SMITH AND J. WHITE,
SEPTEMBER 18, 2008

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER AFFAIRS, SEPTEMBER 18, 2008

AN ACT

1 Providing for home energy assistance to certain persons through
2 payment of matching funds to the hardship funds of certain
3 home energy providers and for powers and duties of the
4 Department of Public Welfare.

5 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
6 hereby enacts as follows:

7 Section 1. Short title.

8 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Home Energy
9 Assistance Act.

10 Section 2. Declaration of policy.

11 The General Assembly finds and declares as follows:

12 (1) The Federal Government recognized the importance of
13 aiding low-income families with heating their homes when it
14 created the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program in
15 1981.

1 (2) Other states have recognized the need to supplement
2 these Federal funds for home heating energy assistance with
3 state funds.

4 (3) The Commonwealth recognizes the importance of
5 allocating State funds to aid families struggling with
6 heating costs that do not fall within the guidelines of the
7 Federal program.

8 (4) Heating oil and propane gas companies and public
9 utilities that provide electricity and natural gas also
10 recognize the need to contribute funds for energy assistance
11 by their establishment of hardship funds.

12 Section 3. Definitions.

13 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall
14 have the meanings given to them in this section unless the
15 context clearly indicates otherwise:

16 "Average monthly degree day." The average daily temperature
17 for a given month.

18 "Department." The Department of Public Welfare of the
19 Commonwealth.

20 "Eligible ratepayer." A ratepayer whose payment to a home
21 energy provider for service is delinquent or has otherwise
22 extenuating circumstances and whose income falls between 151%
23 and 200% of the Federal poverty guidelines as reported by the
24 Department of Health and Human Services.

25 "Hardship fund." Funds established by a home energy provider
26 to provide cash assistance to those ratepayers who have
27 exhausted all other resources for payment of electricity,
28 heating oil, natural gas or propane gas bills.

29 "Heating season." The months of November, December, January,
30 February and March, consecutively.

1 "Home energy provider." A heating oil or propane gas company
2 or a public utility that provides electricity or natural gas to
3 ratepayers in this Commonwealth.

4 "Ratepayer." A person in whose name a residential service
5 account is listed with a home energy provider and who is
6 primarily responsible for payment of a bill rendered for
7 service.

8 Section 4. Matching funds.

9 The department shall provide matching funds based upon the
10 amount contributed by the stockholders, employees and ratepayers
11 of home energy providers to their hardship funds as contained in
12 the most recent data reported to the Pennsylvania Public Utility
13 Commission or obtained otherwise.

14 Section 5. Application procedure.

15 (a) Time for filing.--A home energy provider may apply for
16 matching funds and must notify the department of its intent to
17 do so during the period of January 1 to February 1.

18 (b) Contents of application.--The application shall be in
19 such form as prescribed by the department and shall contain:

20 (1) The amount to be credited to the home energy
21 provider into its hardship fund.

22 (2) Identification of a nonprofit entity that has agreed
23 to evaluate the financial condition of ratepayers, with their
24 consent, in order to assist the home energy provider with its
25 determination of whether the ratepayers should receive credit
26 through the hardship fund.

27 (3) Such other information as required by the
28 department.

29 Section 6. Distribution.

30 Moneys appropriated to the department for purposes of section

1 4 shall, upon certification by the department of qualified funds
2 in a home energy provider's hardship fund, remit the matching
3 funds to the home energy provider no later than April 1.

4 Section 7. Rules and regulations.

5 The department may promulgate any rules and regulations it
6 determines necessary for the administration of this act.

7 Section 20. Effective date.

8 This act shall take effect in 60 days.